

# LANDMARKS



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Landmarks, the public art program of The University of Texas at Austin, commissions major work by José Parlá, *Amistad América* Opening January 26, 2018**

*Landmarks' collection expands by commissioning a monumental mural by José Parlá  
for new McCombs School of Business' Robert B. Rowling Hall, opening January 2018*

**AUSTIN, Texas** — Landmarks, The University of Texas at Austin's public art program, will unveil *Amistad América*, a monumental mural by José Parlá on January 26, 2018. The site-specific commission is the artist's most ambitious work to date and will be an integral part of Robert B. Rowling Hall, the new graduate education building for the McCombs School of Business. Rowling Hall was designed by Ennead Architects with Jacobs Engineering.

The commission was initiated by Landmarks, one of the most important public art programs to emerge at an American university. On view throughout Austin's 433-acre main campus, the collection includes commissions and acquisitions of works by Michael Ray Charles, Ann Hamilton, Sol LeWitt, Marc Quinn, Ben Rubin, Nancy Rubins, and James Turrell. In addition, Landmarks presents 28 sculptures on long-term loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, featuring works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Louise Bourgeois, Tony Smith, and Ursula von Rydingsvard, among others. Its collection is broadly accessible and free to all, providing opportunities for students and visitors to engage with great art.

*Amistad América*, which translates to "Friendship America," is inspired by the natural and cultural landscape of Texas and the Americas. The mural occupies a wall measuring approximately 4,000 square feet at the grand entrance to Rowling Hall and is the artist's largest painting to date. In creating it, Parlá draws on his interest in the human history of migration, trade, and cultural exchanges. He combines his masterful use of collage, impasto, and signature calligraphic marks—the key features of his paintings' abstract language—to invite open, diplomatic discourse.

"The sheer scale of this undertaking is arresting," said Andrée Bober, founding director of Landmarks, "and José Parlá is the perfect artist to tackle it. He instinctively understands architectural composition, and he's intrepid when it comes to experimenting with new ways to expand his practice. Beyond the visual delight of his painting, I think people will connect with his evocation of history, memory, and the experience of life in the landscape of Austin."

"*Amistad* means friendship, relating to the Spanish translation of Texas, *Tejas*, which derives from the Native American Caddoan word *táy-sha*, meaning *friends*. *Amistad América* speaks to the extensive history of human communication through art and exchange throughout the region," says artist José Parlá. "I began with studies for the mural in my Brooklyn studio, using paint, plaster, and ephemera, but the work has grown while in residence in Austin to incorporate a layering of colors and engraved lines that reflect the city grids and intersections found in the surrounding urban area, speaking to the rich and turbulent history of the Americas."

On January 26, 2018, Landmarks will celebrate the unveiling of *Amistad América* with a public talk featuring Parlá in conversation with Carlo McCormick, an American culture critic and curator, followed by a reception. McCormick will contribute a scholarly essay about the mural. Reflecting on Parlá's work, McCormick has observed, "Caught very much in the moment, Parlá's time is always transitory, a measure of echoes rather than certainties, a resonance of history where absence constitutes a more formidable presence than anything so shiny and new as the present."

Rowling Hall is an architectural anchor of the McCombs School of Business and an extension of the AT&T Hotel and Conference Center. Its design by Ennead with Jacobs Engineering combines flexible classrooms and gathering spaces that support new ways of teaching and learning. A signature feature of the building will be José Parlá's mural, which is sited at the grand entrance to the Zlotnik Family Ballroom in Rowling Hall.

"Among our goals is to encourage students to think broadly and creatively, to question everything, and to be comfortable with ambiguity," said Jay Hartzell, dean of the McCombs School of Business. "Parlá may have grown up with modest beginnings, but he created value by channeling his observations and experiences in a way that resonates with others widely. The success of his work will provide invaluable inspiration."

The installation of Parlá's mural supports Landmarks' broader strategy to develop an extraordinary public art collection that both enhances the aesthetic character of the campus and supports pedagogy. An ongoing percent-for-art allocation ensures the collection develops in tandem with the rapid expansion of the campus.

### **ABOUT JOSÉ PARLÁ**

José Parlá is a critically acclaimed, multidisciplinary artist in painting, large-scale murals, photography, video, and sculpture. Layers of paint, gestural drawing, and found ephemera combine to evoke the histories of urban environments. Using the backdrop of world cities, he creates abstractions that can appear to be photorealist fragments of what he sees in the chaos and rush of the metropolis.

Born in Miami in 1973, Parlá studied at Miami Dade Community College, New World School of the Arts, and Savannah College of Art & Design. His work has been exhibited internationally and includes major commissions for the Brooklyn Academy of Music and The One World Trade Center in New York. Public institutions that have collected his work include The British Museum; The Albright-Knox Art Gallery; POLA Museum of Art in Hakone, Japan; and The National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, Cuba. He is represented by Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, New York.

### **ABOUT LANDMARKS**

Established in 2008, Landmarks is the award-winning public art program of The University of Texas at Austin. Founding director Andrée Bober leads the development of the collection and oversees a vibrant range of programs that support scholarship and learning. Its collection of 40 modern and contemporary works includes commissions from some of the most admired and promising artists of our time. By bringing great art to The University of Texas at Austin, Landmarks enriches the lives of students and visitors, engaging thousands of people every day. For more information, visit [www.landmarks.utexas.edu](http://www.landmarks.utexas.edu).

### **ABOUT ROBERT B. ROWLING HALL**

Rowling Hall will house the McCombs School of Business Texas McCombs MBA and Texas Master of Science in Technology Commercialization programs. It will double the space available for Texas Executive Education programs and, in conjunction with AT&T Hotel and Conference Center, increase the convention and conference activities at the university. The 458,000-square-foot building will be on the corner of Guadalupe Street and East MLK Jr. Blvd., providing a new and iconic gateway to campus.

### **ABOUT ENNEAD ARCHITECTS**

[Ennead Architects](http://www.ennead.com) is an internationally-acclaimed studio with offices in New York City and Shanghai. Renowned for its educational, cultural, scientific and civic building designs that authentically express the progressive missions of their institutions, Ennead has been a leader in the design world for decades. Ennead's buildings are recognized for their formal and affective power, technical virtuosity, contributions to the cultural life of their communities and the enhancement of their physical contexts. At the core of Ennead's values lies a deep and fundamental commitment to create architecture that serves humanity.